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First Selectman Issues Statement on COVID Anniversary

Westport, CT - First Selectman Jim Marpe today issued the following statement on the one-year anniversary of COVID-19 impacting Westport:

Today marks one year since Westport Weston Health District Director Mark Cooper, Westport Public Schools representatives, my fellow Selectpersons, various department heads and I held a press conference on the steps of Town Hall addressing the new "coronavirus" spreading throughout the world. At that time, we knew that COVID had been discovered in Westport, contact tracing efforts could not control its spread, and that community members should be made aware of the serious health and safety issues associated with the virus. We announced that the Public Schools and other town facilities would be closed. We were unaware of how circumstances would unfold in the coming days, weeks, and months to follow.

In the following days, as the town was further shut down and we all entered a phase of self-isolation, I was imploring everyone to "stay safe and stay home." I reminded Westporters to maintain "virus distancing" everywhere; that stores and certain businesses remained open only to insure that food and essentials were available to the public; and that all other activities where people may congregate in groups must be avoided.

In short order, we realized what services were considered essential. We became reliant upon take-out food, curbside pickup, and planned for lines outside grocery stores and pharmacies. Working and schooling from home, scrambling for masks, toilet paper and disinfectant became common occurrences. It was a confusing and unsettling time. In retrospect, however, I believe the common conversations and collective experiences were a way to self-manage the significant emotional toll the pandemic was having on our lives.

We continue to remain careful and vigilant. Thankfully, due to many positive developments throughout the year, the science and information now available provides an understanding of what we must do to contain and combat the virus. I am very thankful that we are in a position today to state that we are beginning to see an end; that much of the unknown has become known; and that we are stronger as a result.

On this solemn anniversary, I send my deepest condolences to those who have lost a loved one and to others who have seen the devastating effects of this pandemic. As a community, we mourn with you and send loving thoughts that the memories of your family members and friends will sustain you in this difficult time.

I would be wholly remiss if I did not emphatically state that, despite its obvious impact, COVID has proved how creative, resilient, and compassionate Westporters truly are. The support for first responders and health care workers, words of encouragement, heart-shaped signs, painted rocks, and donations of handmade PPE, proved to be a motivating force for many. These acts of kindness brought a sense of peace and calm during extremely challenging times. The community spirit and collective concern for all was, and continues to be, uplifting.

In conclusion, I want to express my sincere gratitude to the Westport residents, businesses owners, religious leaders, Town employees, and the multitude of volunteers who offered advice, maintained services, provided comfort, financial support, and generally surpassed expectations in caring for all of our neighbors. Your cooperation and unselfish participation, under extreme conditions, was extraordinary. I will always be thankful that Westporters were able to respond to and meet the unique challenge that was COVID. And I am confident that brighter days are ahead. Please continue to be safe and healthy.

For more information on Westport's response to COVID-19, visit westportct.gov/covid, or wwhd.org. For up-to-date information on COVID-19 vaccination distribution plans in Connecticut, visit ct.gov/covidvaccine.

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